

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 COPENHAGEN 0493

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CB SW FI DA

SUBJ: CONFIDENTIAL DANISH REPORT ON CAMBODIA

THREE SCANDINAVIAN AMBASSADORS STATIONED IN PEKING RECENTLY VISITED CAMBODIA WHERE THE DANISH AMBASSADOR ALSO PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS. IN VIEW OF THE DEARTHOF INFORMATION ON THAT COUNTRY AND MY OWN PERSONAL INTEREST IN DEVELOPMENTS THERE, I ASKED MFA PERMANENT UNDER SECRETARY EIGIL JORGENSEN WHETHER HE WOULD SHARE WITH US THE REPORTS THE DANISH GOVERNMENT HAS RECEIVED ON THAT VISIT. THE FOLLOWING IS AN INFORMAL TRANSLATION OF THE CONFIDENTIAL CABLE SENT BY DANISH AMBASSADOR MORTENSEN ON HIS MEETING WITH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IENG SARY:

1. BEGIN TRANSLATION: EACH OF THE THREE NORDIC AMBASSADORS (DENMARK, SWEDEN AND FINLAND)WHO VISITED KAMPUCHEA DURING THE PERIOD JAN 7-21, 1978, HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS FOREIGN POLITICAL QUESTIONS WITH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IENG SARY. HOWEVER, ALL THREE OF US FELT THE NEED TO DISCUSS CERTAIN DOMESTIC (CAMBODIAN) POLITICAL ASPECTS AND A JOINT REQUEST WAS SUBMITTED FOR A NEW CONVERSATION WITH IENG SARY, WHICH TOOK PLACE ON JAN 17, 1978.

2. ON ADVANCE AGREEMENT, THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WERE POSED TO CONFIDENTIAL

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IENG SARY:

(A) HOW DOES THE NON-MONETARY SOCIETY FUNCTION? (SWEDEN).

(B) THE FOREIGN TRADE OF KAMPUCHEA? (FINLAND)

(C) CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE EVACUATION OF PHNOM PENH IN APRIL OF 1975? (DENMARK)

THE SOMEWHAT SPARSE INFORMATION ELECITED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS (A) AND (B) WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF A GENERAL DEPART-

MENTAL REPORT.

3. INsofar AS QUESTION (C) WAS CONCERNED, I STATED THAT THERE WAS RECOGNITION THAT BECAUSE OF THE WAR PHNOM PENH HAD AN EXORBITANTLY HIGH NUMBER OF INHABITANTS. THERE WAS ALSO UNDERSTANDING OF A NEED TO RESTRUCTURE THE ECONOMY OF THE COUNTRY. INTERNATIONAL OPINION, INCLUDING THAT OF THE NORDIC COUNTRIES, HAS NEVERTHELESS STRONGLY CRITICIZED THE MANNER IN WHICH THE KAMPUCHEAN AUTHORITIES CARRIED OUT THE EVACUATION. IT WOULD, THEREFORE, INTEREST OUR RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS--AND IT WOULD PROBABLY ALSO BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE GOVERNMENT OF KAMPUCHEA ITSELF--TO GIVE US AN ACCOUNT OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE EVACUATION.

4. IENG SARY THEREUPON LAUNCHED A LONG EXPOSE WHICH LED US TO THINK THAT HE WAS NOT WHOLLY UNPREPARED FOR THE MATTER TO BE BROUGHT UP. HE STARTED OUT BY DESCRIBING THE MILITARY SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY IN EARLY 1975 WHEN THE MAJOR CITIES INCLUDING THE CAPITAL WERE IN THE HANDS OF THE LON NOL FORCES, WHICH THEN NUMBERED 180,000 MEN, OF WHOM 80,000 WERE STATIONED IN PHNOM PENH.

5. MATERIALLY, THESE FORCES WERE FAR SUPERIOR TO THE KHMER ROUGE FORCES. THE LATTER HAD NO AIR FORCE OR ARTILLERY. ON APRIL 5, THE SUPPLY LINE TO PHNOM PENH ALONG THE MEKONG RIVER WAS CUT AND LON NOL STEPPED DOWN. ON APRIL 12, THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR

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LEFT THE CAPITAL. LON NOL'S STEPPING DOWN WAS, HOWEVER, CLEARLY A POLITICAL MANEUVER AND, GIVEN THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF EVENTS, A DECISION REGARDING WHAT TO DO ABOUT PHNOM PENH ONCE IT FELL HAD TO BE MADE. THIS HAPPENED ON APRIL 17, 1975.

6. DESPITE THE ADVICE OF UNIDENTIFIED FRIENDS (THE VIETNAMESE?), A DECISION TO EVACUATE THE WHOLE POPULATION WAS MADE FOR THREE REASONS:

(A) SHORTAGE OF FOOD

(B) SECURITY

(C) THE NEED TO INCREASE THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.

RE (A). AT THE TIME PHNOM PENH FELL, THERE WERE THREE MILLION PEOPLE IN THE CITY AND FIVE MILLION IN THE RURAL AREAS. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO BRING NEEDED FOOD SUPPLIES TO THE CITY.

RE (B). THERE COULD BE NO DOUBT THAT THE LON NOL FORCES WOULD ATTEMPT TO RECOVER CONTROL. THEY HAD ARMS SUFFICIENT TO DESTROY THE RED ARMY, BUT COULD NOT BE IDENTIFIED AS THEY HAD DONNED CIVILIAN CLOTHING AND HAD MIXED WITH THE CIVILIAN POPULATION. THEY HAD EVEN ASSUMED OTHER NAMES. ONCE THE CITY POPULATION HAD BEEN SENT INTO THE RURAL AREAS, THEIR IDENTIFICATION WAS EASIER TO MAKE.

RE (C). IF A FOOD CRISIS WERE NOT TO ARISE, THE CITY POPULATION

HAD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.

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7. THE MILITARY SITUATION CALLED FOR FAST ACTION, AND PHNOM PENH WAS EVACUATED IN THE COURSE OF A WEEK. THE COLLECTIVE FARMS IN THE RURAL DISTRICTS HAD BEEN ALERTED TO RECEIVE THE CITY POPULATION. THE EVACUATION, HOWEVER, CREATED DIFFICULTIES, AND 2,000 PEOPLE DIED ON THE WAY.

8. ALSO THE PERIOD AFTER THE EVACUATION CAUSED DIFFICULTIES. THE CITY POPULATION WAS NOT USED TO LIVING IN THE COUNTRY. MALARIA BROKE OUT AMONG THE EVACUEES, RESULTING IN DEATHS. (HE DID NOT INDICATED HOW MANY.) WHEN JUDGING THE EVAUCATION, IT HAD TO BE CONSIDERED THAT 2.3 MILLION OF THE 3 MILLION EVACUATED WERE FARMERS TO BEGIN WITH, AND WITH THESE, NO PROBLEMS AROSE. THE DIFFICULTY WAS THE 700,000 WHO HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION. BY AND LARGE THESE PROBLES HAVE NOW BEEN OVERCOME. HOSING WAS SUFFICIENT, AS WELL AS FOOD AND CLOTHING, ALTHOUGH NOT IN ABUNDANCE. THE EVACUEES, WHO ORIGINALLY HAD BEEN SUSPECT, BUT WHO HAVE WORKED LOYALLY IN THE RURAL DISTRICTS, HAVE NOW BEEN FULLY ACCEPTED AS PART OF THE COMMUNITY.

9. NOW, SLOWLY, A REACTIVATION OF URBAN INDUSTRIES HAS BEGUN. BUT THE LARGER INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES WILL NOT BE IN OPERATION UNTIL THE END OF THE YEAR. IENG SARY STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT THE TOWNS IN THE FUTURE WOULD BE PRODUCTION CENTERS ONLY, AND THERE WOULD BE NO ROOM FOR A BUREAUCRACY.

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20. COMMENT: THIS ACCOUNT CANNOT, OF COURSE, BE REGARDED AS SATISFACTORY. IT GIVES NO ACCEPTABLE EXPLANATION OF WHY, FOR INSTANCE, IT WAS CONSIDERED NECESSARY TO EVACUATE THE SICK, THE OLD AND INFANTS WHEN THE PERCENTAGE OF THOSE LOST WOULD NATURALLY BE HIGH. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO JUDGE FROM IENG SARY'S ACCOUNT HOW GREAT THE HUMAN LOSSES WERE -- NOT AN INSIGNIFICANT PART OF THEM WERE LOST IN THE CLASH WITH SUPPORTERS OF THE LON NOL GOVERNMENT -- AND HE DID NOT CAST MUCH LIGHT ON THIS.

11. THE PURPOSE OF MY QUESTION TO IENG SARY WAS PRIMARILY TO REMIND THE PRESENT REGIME OF THE REACTION THE EVACUATION HAD PROVOKED IN THE REST OF THE WORLD. IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT THIS WAS UNDERSTOOD BY THE KAMPUCHEAN SIDE. GENERALLY SPEAKING, THERE SEEMS TO BE INCREASING UNDERSTANDING BY THE REGIME THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR IT NOT TO CREATE DIFFICULTIES FOR ITSELF WITH WORLD PUBLIC OPINION, ESPECIALLY DURING THE PRESENT STATE OF CONFLICT WITH VIETNAM. UNFORTUNATELY, WHAT HAS ALREADY TAKEN PLACE CANNOT BE REPAIRED.

12. TO COMPLETE THE PICTURE IT SHOULD BE ADDED THAT AT AN EARLY STAGE OF THE VISIT I ASKED THE KAMPUCHEAN AUTHORITIES FOR PERMISSION TO VISIT ONE OF THE AREAS TO WHICH THE CITY DWELLERS HAD BEEN EVACUATED. THE REQUEST WAS REJECTED ON THE GROUND THAT THE PEOPLE WERE NOW FULLY INTEGRATED INTO THE INDIVIDUAL COLLECTIVE AND, THEREFORE, ONE COULD NOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE ORIGINAL MEMBERS OF THE COLLECTIVES AND THOSE WHO HAD MOVED INTO THEM.
END TRANSLATION.
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